

- 197 In spite of the distribution of the Miskito over so vast a territory, the dialectical variations of their language are comparatively insignificant. Five dialects have been observed by the writer (vide Conzemius, d: 59-64). A small part of the Miskito has kept aloof from admixture with the Negro; these are called *Tāwira* "Heavy-haired."² Lehmann (c: I, 105, 107, 464) attempts to connect the ancient Chuchures of Panama with the Miskito, but this theory is barely acceptable. These Chuchures are said to have arrived in canoes from Honduras, and they settled in the neighborhood of Nombre de Dios. But their number gradually declined owing to disease and they finally disappeared altogether.

- [144] 192 Many corrupted English words have passed into the speech of the Miskito, while words borrowed from Spanish are much less common. In certain regions, especially on the upper Rio Coco, a large number of Sumu words have been incorporated in the language.

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE SUMU

- 101 Inland from the Miskito, from Rio Patuca to Rio Punta Gorda, live the more primitive Sumu, who speak a related language. They inhabit chiefly the headwaters of the larger rivers or the affluents thereof. Owing to close intermarriage and lack of hygienic living conditions they are rapidly diminishing in numbers, and the day of their complete disappearance or absorption by the Miskito does not seem far off. Their total number is estimated at about 3,000 to 3,500.

- 101 The Sumu are split into different subtribes speaking various dialects which are almost mutually intelligible. These are known by the names *Twahka*, *Ulwa*, *Panamaka*, *Bawihka*, and *Kukra* (vide Conzemius, d: 64-73). The three first named of these subtribes number about 1,000 each, the Bawihka not more than 150, while the Kukra are practically extinct.

- 101 The Twahka inhabit the northern section of the Sumu territory and are found on the rivers Patuca (Guampú), Coco (Lakus and lower Waspuk), Wawa and Kukallaya. The Panamaka live on Rio Coco (Bocay and upper Waspuk) and on Rio Prinssapolca, while

² For the pronunciation of the Indian words the following phonetic system has been used:

a, e, i, o, u, correspond to the sounds of these vowels in German or Spanish.

ai as ai in "aile."

au as ou in "how."

oi as oi in "boil."

ŋ as ng in "sing."

z as Spanish j or German ch in "ach" or Scotch ch in "loch."

y is always a consonant.

Nasalization of vowels is indicated by the tilde (~) as in Portuguese.

All the other letters have approximately the same value as in English.

Meanwhile the Twahka lived in the bush. They were wild and unkempt; their hair fell to their knees and they were full of lice. Finally the King of the Miskito sent for them and captured them; he had them washed and altogether regenerated them, so that he won their love and obtained their support.¹⁷³

The language of the Miskito is closely allied to that of the Sumu, but it also contains many foreign words. It is very probable that the Miskito were originally a subtribe of the Sumu, and that they have become greatly modified in the course of the centuries through intermarriage with Negroes, Europeans, and other Indian tribes. Already in 1875, at a time when the relationship of the Miskito and Sumu languages was still unknown, Zúñiga Echenique (209) considered the Miskito as the offspring of fugitive slaves with Twahka women. Of the various Sumu subtribes still existing, the Bawihka is the one which linguistically and ethnographically presents the greatest affinity to the Miskito. The Bawihka formerly occupied the region immediately adjoining the coast line where the Miskito were met with by the first Europeans during the latter part of the seventeenth century. These facts induce me to believe that the hybrid tribe of the Miskito owes its origin to the intermarriage of the Bawihka with the Negroes escaped from the slave ship which was wrecked to the south of Cabo Gracias a Dios in 1641.^{101 144}

These Africans arrived on a Portuguese slave ship captained by Lourenço Gramalxo. The vessel had taken its black cargo on board while anchoring at the Guinea Coast, and then headed for Brazil. While on the high seas the Negroes revolted and made themselves masters of the ship. Not knowing anything about the art of navigation they allowed their vessel to be carried by the trade wind and ocean currents toward the coast of Central America, where it became wrecked on the Mosquito Keys, situated a little south of Cabo Gracias a Dios. The Negroes, who were able to reach the mainland, were captured by the Indians and reduced to slavery. They were, however, allowed to intermarry with their masters, and their children grew up as free members of the tribe. (Vide Peralta, b: 57-58, 121; Exquemelin, French ed.: II, 276-277; Edwards: V, 210; M. W.: 303, 307.)¹⁴⁴

Henderson (216) states, however, that these Africans proceeded from the Samba country in West Africa and that their vessel was Dutch. This is repeated by Roberts (153), Young (71-72) and De Kalb (27). The last named author further specifies that the vessel in question was wrecked in 1650 and that the Africans proceeded from Samba Island at the mouth of the Cassiri River in Senegambia. Bell (b: 3) likewise considered the vessel as Dutch and says that it was wrecked near Dakuna at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This date is, however, incorrect.^[567]

¹ The addition regarding the Miskito King is of recent date. No mention is made of the other Sumu subtribes, as the Panamaka, Bawihka, or Kukra.

144 On the other hand, Santaella Melgarejo, in a report dated Guatemala, April 3, 1715 (Peralta, b: 78-80), states that the vessel in question was English and that it was wrecked in 1652 on the Cajones or Tiburones Keys to the east of Cabo Gracias a Dios. Fearing the Indians from the mainland, the Negroes settled at first at some keys south of the mentioned Cajones (undoubtedly the Mosquito Keys), and once friendly relations were established with the natives, they established themselves at Cabo Gracias a Dios.

Again it is said that the vessel in question was Spanish and bound for Cuba (Ravenau de Lussan: 437-438; Heath, a: 51).

Our source material pertaining to the origin of these slaves is therefore very meager and contradictory. According to a report of Fray Benito Garret y Arlové, dated November 30, 1711 (Peralta, b: 57), one of these Africans, an old man named Juan Ramón, who lived in Granada (Nicaragua) related that about one-third of his countrymen were captured by the Indians and reduced to slavery. The others took to the bush, whence they carried on a crude warfare with the aborigines, who were finally compelled to retreat toward the interior. About 1672 the number of these African slaves held by the Miskito was estimated at about 200; in those days they had already adopted the language and customs of the Indians (Exquemelin, Fr. ed.: II, 276-277).

As a result of the above, the Miskito from Cabo Gracias a Dios to Sandy Bay had already a large admixture of African blood toward the end of the seventeenth century. In the course of time refugee slaves from the English settlements and more recent immigration of Negroes and Mulattoes (chiefly from the West Indies) have contributed to the spreading of the African type, so that to-day Negro characteristics may be observed in almost every village. One of the subtribes of the Miskito, the *Tawira* who live a short distance inland, from Sandy Bay to Wawa River, however, have refused to mingle their blood with that of the Africans. It is only in recent years that they have begun to intermarry with the mixed Miskito, especially with newcomers from Rio Coco, so that soon a Miskito of pure Indian blood will be a thing of the past.

● 197 We do not know to what extent these African slaves have influenced the original language of the Miskito, for such researches would entail exhaustive comparative studies with the surrounding Indian languages (Sumu, Paya, Rama), with the Creole dialects of the West Indies, and the languages of the Guinea Coast. The vowel scale is exactly the same as in the Jamaican Creole dialect; several of the peculiar phrases of everyday life are found literally translated into English in Jamaica (Heath, a: 51).

173 We are also indebted to Mr. Heath for a Miskito migration legend which is said to have been given out as authentic by Eduardo Pereira,

721 selves consider King Buppan's Bluff (Peñasco de Buppan, Frontón de Guapan), a promontory situated about 22 miles east of Escudo de Veragua Island, as the southernmost point visited by their ancestors.

721 Thus the Miskito acquired an ascendancy over practically the entire
197 Atlantic seaboard from Cabo Honduras (near Trujillo in Honduras) to Chiriqui Lagoon (Panama). Their language is understood by many Indians from the neighboring tribes (Sumu, Rama, and Paya), and still plays the rôle of a *lingua franca* in certain parts of the Mosquito Coast. The part played by the Miskito in Central America in former days is similar to that of the Carib tribes of South America and the Antilles, but in the latter region the rôle of the English was taken by the Dutch.

721 The place names belonging to the Miskito language, which may be
103 met with all along the Atlantic shore of Costa Rica and Panama as far south as King Buppan's Bluff, owe their origin to the above-mentioned marauding expeditions (Conzemius, a: 300-306). Still permanent settlements were not made by the Miskito on that vast region, the southern limit of their habitat being formed by Pearl Lagoon, where they established themselves during the latter part of the eighteenth century. About that same period they also spread up some of the larger rivers, as the Patuca, Guagua (Wawa), Cucallaya, Prinsapolca, Rio Grande, and especially Rio Coco; on the last-named stream they may be found as far up as Bocay, that is, about 300 miles from the sea by the circuitous course of the river.

727 TREATMENT OF PRISONERS.—As stated before, the Miskito began
567 their slave-hunting expeditions into the territory of their neighbors toward the end of the seventeenth century. The captive women and children were either kept as slaves (M.: *alba* ^u; S.: *warau*) or they were sold to the Jamaican traders who arrived occasionally on the coast. The boys, when arrived at the age of puberty, were allowed to take a Miskito wife, and the children of such unions grew up as free members of the tribe.

721 Slave-hunting expeditions in seagoing canoes were particularly directed to the Talamanca region (southeastern Costa Rica), where many Tiribi (Terbi) Indians were reduced to slavery. The same fate met the aborigines living around Chiriqui Lagoon (M. W.: 302; Peralta, a: 20, 93, 95; Peláez: II, 156; Young: 35; Conzemius, a: 300-301). Many references to the Miskito slavers may also be

^u This word has evidently some connection with *alawina*, by which name the Miskito called the Sumu formerly, or perhaps all their Indian enemies in general. The Black Carib or Garif apply to the Miskito the name *idudu*, which word likewise had originally the meaning of "alave." (Compare *sicte* "alave" in Father Gumilla's work.)

[144] In 1875 at the time when the relationship of Miskito and Sumu languages was still unknown, Zúñiga Echenique¹⁹ considered the Miskito Indians as the offspring of fugitive slaves with *Twahka* women (see appendix A). Of the existing Sumu tribes today the *Bawihka* is the one which linguistically and ethnologically is the closest to Miskito. The *Bawihka* formerly occupied the area of the coastline where the first Europeans made contact. The fact that Echenique had suggested that the Miskito were derived from slaves and Indians and the fact that the *Bawihka* were on the coast induced Conzemius¹ to deduce that inter-marriage between Negroes and Indians, an ordinary occurrence today, was a possibility in earlier times.

In 1641 a slave ship was wrecked off Cabo Gracias a Dios. The Africans were on a ship commanded by Lourenço Gramalxo.²⁰ While on the high seas the Negroes revolted and mastered the ship and not knowing navigation allowed the vessel to be carried by trade winds, where it became wrecked on the Mosquito keys. The Negroes reached the mainland and were made slaves by the Indians. However, they were allowed to inter-marry and their children became free members of the tribe. There appears to be some controversy as to the owner of the vessel and the year it foundered.^{21, 22}

As a result the Miskito from Cabo Gracias a Dios to Sandy Bay developed an admixture of African blood. This Mixture was enhanced by the coming of other refugee slaves and the more recent immigrations of Negroes and mulattoes from the West Indies. The extent to which [197] the Indian language was influenced by the African newcomers is unknown; the vowel scale of many people in certain villages is the same as the Jamaican creole dialect.^{23, 24}

000 In recent times important contributions with regard to the Miskito

¹⁹ Zúñiga Echenique, Melquíades. Descripción geográfica del departamento de la Mosquitia, practicada en el año de 1875. Madrid, 1905.

²⁰ Vide: Peralta, M. M. Costa Rica y la Costa de Mosquitos. Madrid-Paris, 1898; footnote N° 3; Edwards, B. The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British West Indies, 5 vols. London, 1819. Heath, G. R., quoted by Conzemius (footnote 1), loc. cit. p. 17.

²¹ De Kalb, Courtenay, Nicaragua: Studies on the Mosquito Shore in 1892. Jour. Amer. Geographical Soc. of New York, 1893, 25, 236-288. versus opinion expressed by Peralta (footnote 20).

²² Lehmann, W. Ergebnisse einer Forschungsreise in Mittelamerika und Mexico. Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, 1910, 42, 687-749.

²³ Conzemius, E. Notes on the Miskito and Sumu Languages of Eastern Nicaragua and Honduras. Internat. Jour. Amer. Linguistics, 1929, 5, 57-115.

²⁴ Heath, G. R. Notes on Miskito Grammar and on other Indian languages of Eastern Nicaragua. Amer. Anthropologist, 1913, 15, 48-62.

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177 realization can be directly applied to diets in the tropics: the galaxy of nutritional factors are determined by the local situation and the food habits of the people.

164 The same can be said of tropical infectious disease. The variety of vectors, their ecological relations to circumstances determined by altitude, rains, swamps, climate and vegetation limit disease entities to special regions even though many diseases occur throughout the world. It must be remembered that to the diseases generally present among people are added those which are peculiar to a new environment and that modifications of a disease can take place. For instance, whooping cough is a serious disease attended with a high mortality rate in Central Nicaragua, whereas scarlet fever produces a mild disease often unrecognized. Whether the host or the organism is responsible for such a condition is not known and the problem of host and parasite interrelationships becomes a complex one.

THE MOSQUITO AREA: THE LOCAL SITUATION

101 The vast region on the Atlantic side of Nicaragua and Honduras is known by the name of Mosquito coast. It is inhabited by four different tribes of Indians: The Miskito, the Suma (Sumu), the Paya, and the Rama. In some localities the Miskito, often incorrectly called [44] Mosquito, have a considerable admixture of Negro blood and, for this reason, are in some places called Zambos. The other three tribes, however, are practically of pure Indian blood. In earlier times, the 101 western region of the Mosquito coast was occupied by the Matagalpa 197 Indians, whose language extended over a large area in Nicaragua and Honduras, but has been extinct for nearly half a century. However, a dialect of its is spoken to this day by the older inhabitants of the Salvadorean villages of Cacaopera and Lislisque. Today the Indian languages of the area are somewhat interrelated, especially Matagalpa, Miskito, and Suma; Paya is an unrelated language.

101 The Miskito and small isolated bands of Suma Indians inhabit 361 the eastern side of Honduras and Nicaragua. They are found from the Río Tinto (lat. 15° 50' N.) to Río Punta Gorda (Lat. 11° 30' N.). The villages are located chiefly along the banks of the rivers as far up as the headwaters within the jungle proper. The Suma Indians are found primarily in the interior; they are somewhat uncommunicative, but cooperative. The Miskito are self-sustaining and at times derive additional income from labor with fruit companies, mining enterprises [46] and rubber collecting agencies. Today they play an important part in the wild rubber collection program.